

MNF moves on two big projects

Stan Sylva, Modoc National Forest Supervisor, recently signed a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement, and a Record of Decision for the Noxious Weeds Treatment Project Final Environmental Impact Statement.

"I am extremely pleased to have these two important efforts completed," Sylva said. "The Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy and the Noxious Weeds Treatment Project are critical in helping us improve the health of our forests and rangelands across the Modoc

National Forest."

The Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy is the result of a collaborative planning effort lead by the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and Modoc County. It focuses on the restoration of sage steppe habitat across a 6.5 million acre analysis area. The ROD signed by Supervisor Sylva documents his selected alternative for restoring sage steppe habitat across the Modoc National Forest.

This decision is a non-significant amendment to the
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Modoc National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, and does not make decisions on site specific projects. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Strategy was released in August 2007 and the Final Environmental Impact Statement was released in May, 2008. The Bureau of Land Management will issue companion RODs for lands under their jurisdiction.

The ROD for the Noxious Weeds Treatment Project describes Supervisor Sylva's selected alternative for site specific treatment of noxious weeds across the Modoc National Forest. Treatment will be by various methods including hand, mechanical, cultural and the use of herbicides, where necessary. The DEIS for this project was released in November 2004 and the FEIS was released in September 2008.

The Legal Notices for each of the Records of Decision will appear in the paper of record on September 25, 2008, initiating the 45-day administrative review periods associated with each of these decisions.

**LEGAL NOTICE
NOTICE OF DECISION
USDA - FOREST
SERVICE
PACIFIC SOUTHWEST
REGION
MODOC NATIONAL
FOREST**

The Modoc National Forest announces completion of the Record of Decision for the Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement.

This ROD pertains to National Forest Lands contained within the boundary of the Modoc National Forest, which includes Modoc County, and portions of Lassen and Siskiyou Counties in California. The three Bureau of Land Management Field Offices in northeastern California will issue companion Records of Decision, in accordance with their regulations and procedures.

**BACKGROUND
INFORMATION**

The Modoc National Forest and Bureau of Land Management's, Alturas Field Office worked together with Modoc County, California to develop the Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy Environmental Impact Statement. The EIS focuses on the restoration of sage steppe ecosystems that have come to be dominated by juniper, as the density of Western juniper has increased over the landscape. The management strategies in the EIS broadly identify appropriate restoration methodologies by ecological conditions; and provide guidelines for design and implementation of effective restoration treatments for restoration areas to be analyzed site specifically over a 50- year horizon.

The entire Analysis Area covers approximately 6.5 million acres of public and private land. Within the Analysis Area, there is an identified Focus Area that contains the sage steppe ecosystem and includes all areas that are proposed for restoration treatment. Restoration projects would occur on National Forest lands and public lands administered by the BLM in parts of Modoc, Lassen, Shasta and Siskiyou Counties, California and Washoe County, Nevada. Lands other than FS and BLM administered lands are taken in consideration

in this analysis to provide contextual information to guide decision-making by the two agencies.

DECISION

Stanley G. Sylva, Supervisor, Modoc National Forest, approved the Record of Decision on September 17, 2008, after review of the FEIS, the project file, and all public comments received during the planning effort. The FEIS provided an analysis for six alternatives, including the No Action (Current Management) Alternative.

It is the decision of Stanley G. Sylva, Forest Supervisor, to adopt Alternative J, the Preferred Alternative from the Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Modoc National Forest. The adoption of this alternative will be a non-significant amendment to the 1991 Modoc National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Six Design Standards are included in Alternative J to guide site specific implementation of the Strategy. These six Design Standards which will become Modoc LRMP standards, address resources and resource uses including: Cultural Resources, Firewood Gathering, Livestock Grazing Management Practices, Old Growth Juniper, Road Management, and a Monitoring and Adjustment Approach.

Alternative J emphasizes the use of mechanical treatments to lessen environmental risks associated with prescribed and wildland fire use including noxious weed spread, uncertain results, short-term impacts to sage obligate species, disruption of Native American cultural resources and activities, and reduction in air quality.

Under Alternative J, the FS and BLM will jointly treat approximately 14,000 to 21,000 acres annually for the first two decades, and then approximately 34,000 acres per year for the subsequent decades.

The Record of Decision for the Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration contains a description of the other alternatives considered and rationale as to why they were not selected.

**IMPLEMENTATION
DATE**

In accordance with 36 CFR 217.10(a), implementation of this decision will not occur until at least 7

days subsequent to publication of the legal notice for this decision.

**ADMINISTRATIVE
REVIEW OR APPEAL
OPPORTUNITIES**

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery), in duplicate, with the Appeal Deciding Officer: Randy Moore, Regional Forester, 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592. The FAX number is (707) 562-9130.

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to appeals-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification. Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days from the day after the publication of this notice in the *Modoc County Record*, the newspaper of record. Attachments received after the 45 day appeal period will not be considered. The publication date in the *Modoc County Record*, the newspaper of record, is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

The notice of appeal must meet the appeal content requirements at 36 CFR 217.9.

**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION**

For further information, or to request a copy of the Record of Decision, contact Rob Jeffers, Project Lead, Modoc National Forest, 800 West 12th Street, Alturas, CA 96101 or call (530) 233-8816, or email your request to rgieffers@fs.fed.us.

**SUPPLEMENTARY
INFORMATION**

Letters announcing the availability of the Record of Decision for the Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy FEIS have been sent to affected federal, state, and local gov-

ernment agencies and to other interested parties. Those who specifically requested copies were sent printed copies. Copies of the Record of Decision are available for public inspection at the Modoc National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 800 West 12th Street, Alturas, CA. Interested persons may also view the Record of Decision on the Forest Service's web site at www.fs.fed.us/r5/modoc/projects/sagebrush-restoration-web/juniper-strategy.shtml.

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